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SERMON

Preached before the
Lords Spiritual & Temporal
in Parliament Assembled,
IN
The *Abbey-Church at Westminster,*
ON
The FAST-DAY, *April the Fourth, 1701.*

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
Hough
JOHN Lord Bishop of *Litchfield & Coventry.*

L O N D O N:
Printed for *Jacob Tonson,* within *Gray's-Inn*
Gate next Gray's-Inn-Lane, 1701.

SERMON

Die Luna 7^a Aprilis, 1701.

It is Ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled, That the Thanks of this House shall be, and are hereby given, to the Lord Bishop of *Litchfield and Coventry*, for his Sermon Preached on the Fast-Day, before this House, in the Abbey-Church at *Westminster*; and he is hereby Desired to Print and Publish the same.

Matth. Johnson,

Cl^r Parliamentor^s.



Printed for Jacob Tonson, within Grays-Inn
Gate next Grays-Inn-Lane, 1701.

PSALM cxxvii. 1.

Except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the City the watchman waketh but in vain.

THE House here mention'd in the Text is most eminently and in the first Place to be understood of the House of God, the Temple which Solomon was appointed to build at Jerusalem. David himself had set his Heart upon this Work, 'twas the constant Subject of his Thoughts, and he prepar'd for it with all his Might: But God was pleas'd to reserve that Honour for his Son; giving to him however a sight of what it should be, an Impression and distinct Idea not only of the whole Fabrick but the compleat Furniture thereof; and David, tho' he was deny'd to build, was careful throughout all the Troubles of his Reign to make Provisions suitable to the divine and glorious Model in his Mind; he rais'd an immense, and for that Age al-

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most incredible, Treasure of his own; and not content therewith we find the last moments of his Life employ'd in provoking his People to a liberal Contribution, which they made in a measure even above his expectation: He then orders Solomon to go on vigorously in the Building; Be strong, and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismay'd, for the Lord God even my God will be with thee, he will not fail thee nor forsake thee until thou hast finish'd all the work for the service of the house of the Lord: And there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man for any manner of service, also the Princes and all the People will be wholly at thy commandment. With such a Treasure, and so universal a concurrence of his Subjects, was it possible for Solomon to fail in the Design? It seems David thought so, if he had nothing else to trust to, and therefore he endeavours to take him off from a Confidence in them, and to bring him to an entire dependence upon God; for without it the Skill and Industry of the Workmen will be lost. *Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it.* The

The second Proposition of my Text we may reasonably believe has an especial regard to the City or Fortrefs of Jerusalem; a Place so impregnable by its Situation and natural Strength, that the Jebusites continu'd in possession of it above 500 Years after the Children of Israel enter'd into the Land, and when David at last besieg'd and took it, the Inhabitants had so despicable an Opinion of the Attempt, and thought themselves so very secure, that in derision they set the Blind and the Lame to guard their Walls. Some indeed understand this of their Gods, others of the Jebusites themselves; whom they suppose to fall under this Character for their ignorant and careless management of the Siege; but the plain, or literal Construction of the Words is most natural, and, be as it will, their Confidence was ill grounded, the Courage of Joab (when God saw fit to deliver them into his Hands) surmounted all other Difficulties, and they learnt by Experience that except the Lord keep the City the watchman waketh but in vain.

The general Import (therefore of my Text is, That neither Church nor State can prosper, neither Religious nor Secular

Affairs can be successfully carry'd on, unless God is pleas'd to make himself a Party, and co-operate therein. And this, I hope, may be *no improper Subject* for our present Consideration: I am sure it is a *very mortifying one*, if we consider the Dangers wherewith the Protestant Interest, and our Civil Liberties are threaten'd, and how little Care we have taken to secure God on our Side.

We have seen the Cause of the Reformation deserted and betray'd abroad, by some whose Ancestors appear'd earliest in the Support of it. We have seen the very Name of it extinguish'd where it had spread and enlarg'd it self in all human appearance beyond a possibility of Extirpation, and we still either see it openly persecuted or perceive it secretly to be undermin'd in all the Parts of *Christendom*, as far as Popish Cruelty, and Malice, and Treachery, can extend themselves.

We see likewise among the Powers of *Europe* that all the rest are lessen'd by one that is overgrown, that the Ballance (as some express it) is entirely lost among them, and 'tis well if it be not past retrieve.

We know the part this Nation has for some
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Centuries sustain'd, and what Hand has bin accustom'd to hold it; may God Almighty still give Strength enough to preserve the Poise, for whenever 'tis given up we subsist precariously and at Discretion, and then 'tis easy to foretel the Fate of our envy'd Liberty which has so often stood in the way of, and chequ'd the most ambitious Designs. Empire of course endeavours to extend itself, and the encrease of Power like a rising Flood makes it only more impetuous, every Thing is overborn that opposes its progress, till at last only God can say to the one as to the other, *Hitherto shall ye go and no further.* Things are not yet, blessed be God, arriv'd to this Extremity, and we trust they never will; but the appointment of this Days Humiliation speaks all our Apprehensions, our present Address to God is to implore his Succour, and with Shame and Grief of Heart to own we have not deserv'd it.

I do not however intend to be more particular, for 'tis not the Business of this Place to expose our Weakness or aggravate our Miscarriages: And therefore I return to the Consideration of my Text, *Except the Lord build the House they labour in vain*
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that build it. Except the Lord keep the City the watchman waketh but in vain. I have before observ'd the general Import of these Words to be, That neither Church nor State can prosper, neither Religious nor Secular Affairs can successfully be carried on, unless God is pleas'd to make himself a Party and co-operate therein: And I shall at present apply myself chiefly to the Proof of this Proposition, which will allow me to be but short upon what I shall attempt in the second Place to shew, how God may be engag'd to take our part.

To begin therefore with the Proof, let us consider who is the Enemy that obstructs our Affairs, and what are the chief Articles of his Strength. The Enemy is the Devil the Destroyer, *who goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour,* whose Envy is restless, and his Malice implacable, who is always intent upon our Ruin, and never intermits his Endeavours to disturb our present Peace, and disappoint our future Hopes, who uses not only open Force but all the Arts of Treachery and Falshood, and where he cannot compass his End as an Adversary, never fails to attempt it

it in the Disguise of a Friend. This is the Temper of the Enemy we have to deal with, and if we consider his Strength, and the Advantages he has over us, nothing can appear more terrible, or more effectually carry us to God for Refuge. His very first Assault weaken'd Man to such a degree that he has never since bin able to withstand him without Succour. Who can express his Knowledge and his Experience, his Activity and Force, his Subtilty and Penetration? Who from the beginning has seen all the Operations of second Causes, and knows what Effects they will naturally produce; who (unless God opposes) can rally them at his Pleasure, and set them all in Array against us. Who has bin privy to all the Actions, if not to the Thoughts of Mankind, and by looking back to their several Springs, is able to guess with great probability what others will do in the same Circumstances; who can search the whole Frame and Contexture of our Bodies, knows exactly their Temper and Constitution, sees where the Seeds of the several Passions lye, and in what manner they propagate, and grow up in the Mind. Who, if God permit, can stir them up by Ways unknown
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and undiscernible to us ; nay, who by the constant Intelligence he holds with them, can often defeat our best Intentions, and disappoint our noblest Undertakings.

Let us descend to Particulars, and considering the Case in Church and State, distinctly, and apart, give me leave to instance in three Ways, whereby the Enemy hinders the building of God's House, (that is) the true Edification of his People. The First and the Second have relation to the Communion of *Rome*, the Third respects those of the Reformation.

And Firsts he effects this by raising up an exorbitant Ambition in the Church, to erect a Spiritual Tyranny over the Souls of Men.

Secondly, By continuing to establish and enlarge this Tyranny by all the Methods of Force and Cruelty. And

Thirdly, By seducing some of those who had rescu'd themselves from under it, to a false and scandalous use of their Liberty.

And First, I say our great Enemy has prevented the Edification of Mankind by raising up an exorbitant Ambition in the Church

Church to erect a Spiritual Tyranny over the Souls of Men. This in *Rome* has bin the cause of all her false Doctrins, and in darker Ages fill'd the World with childish Legends and ridiculous Miracles. In this Foundation the Ignorance of the People is laid, and upon this is built the Doctrin of Infallibility, whereby both Priests and People are forever chain'd down to their Errors.

To enlarge a little upon this ill Treatment of the People. How is it possible for them to grow in the Knowledg of the Truth, when they are forc'd to swallow the Spiritual Food as it is given 'em, and dare never suffer it to undergo a Digestion? Who must neither believe their Eyes nor Ears, nor presume to discern or judg for themselves; who are fain to take the Rule of Faith and Practice at second Hand, and are not trusted with it as it immediately comes from God. Who must receive what is offer'd implicitly and upon content, and whom Doubts and Scruples expose to harder Penances than the greatest Immoralities. This brings Men to give up their Souls entirely to the Management of their Directors, and lazily to acquiesce without farther

Enquiry in their Opinions and Determinations; till at last they arrive at a Spiritual Inactivity, and have no Disposition to make their eternal Interest the Subject of their Concern. This is a lamentable Condition, and yet perhaps this is not the worst of it, for Activity is of the Nature and Essence of the Mind, which if restrain'd from employing itself about such Affairs as most immediately concern it, will not fail to betake itself to other Business; to make Provision for the Flesh and the Lusts thereof. And what are the Discouragements she is likely to meet with in this pursuit? Every Offence indeed draws after it the Shame of a Confession, and that perhaps may be succeeded by some corporal Austerity, but the Secrecy which both Reason and Policy oblige the Priest to, with the Consideration that what one Man does, he confesses only to another of like Infirmary, go a great way in abatement of the Shame: And for the Matter of Punishment the Indulgence of the Church is very liberally extended to her Orthodox Sons, and if they give her no Reason to suspect their Faith, she will give them none to complain of her Severity. But how exceedingly does this lessen the
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Hope we would gladly entertain of their future Safety? When we consider that the Christian Religion is a reasonable Institution, and our Submission to it no farther acceptable in the sight of God, than as it is a reasonable Service; that we neither do nor can in good earnest believe, but upon reasonable Inducements; and that, whenever our Actions are govern'd by any other Principle, they are often vicious and irregular, always unmanly. This makes us feel how intolerable the *Roman Yoke* is, and how much below the Dignity of human Nature. And 'tis very observable, that as that Church does not teach but command, nor require Understanding but a blind Obedience, so she is forc'd to support her Authority by sutable Methods. By groundless and insolent Pretensions, by wicked Condescensions to carnal Interests and Passions, by false Representations and scandalous Suggestions, by Fraud and Deceit, by Force and Cruelty; in short, by all Courses that can be taken either to make Men wink, or put out their Eyes: And without them she would long before this have bin forlorn in spite of all the Advantages and Honours that attend Her.

I come now to consider the Second Method whereby the Progress of the Gospel is hinder'd in the Church of *Rome*, and that is by using Force in the Support and Propagation of her Doctrines.

This has enlarg'd her Dominion more than all her other Arts and Policies put together, and is an Argument which has frequently made its way where her baffled Reasonings have not dar'd to appear.

Nothing is more Generous than for those that think themselves in the possession of Truth, to endeavour the Conviction of others; 'tis a Relief to their Understandings much more valuable than what their Bodies can receive, and therefore 'tis fit our Zeal and Sollicitude should encrease proportionable to the weight and importance of the Truth we offer; this makes us not only debate and argue, but justifies us when we press and importune, and call in all the Motives of Persuasion to our Aid. Thus far we are in the right. But when Happiness, the eternal Happiness of the Persons address'd to depends upon the Success of the Dispute, some honest Men have thought they might carry their good Intentions a little farther, and use

use some degrees of Compulsion to awaken Men's Attention, and bring them to a more serious Consideration of what is propos'd. But here they are transported out of the Road of God's Word, and here the Devil begins his Measures.

The Scripture invites but does not compel, nor ever thought of so irrational a part as building Faith upon that Foundation ; as we are moral Agents Force may influence our Actions, but can have no tendency to enlighten our Understandings, or so much as prepare us to receive Information. Truth is not violent nor overbearing, nor has any occasion to obtrude itself, for the Mind that discovers certainly embraces it ; and tho' the practical Assent where the Affections draw strongly another way may be withheld, yet the inward Judgment undoubtedly condemns the Outrage.

If outward Profession made a Christian no means could be more infallible than Force to accomplish it, and Dragoons without question would be the properest Missionaries ; but since Faith alone gives that Denomination, 'tis in vain to think of conveying it by any other Medium than that of Argument and Instruction, which will
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always most easily inſinuate themſelves when they carry along with 'em the Marks of a diſinterested good Nature; and whoever attempts it by other Ways, puts himſelf backward in his Deſign, by raiſing up Prejudice and Suspicion to oppoſe him: For Men do not love even to be oblig'd in a controuling manner, nor will eaſily admit, that Kindneſs and Good-Will, are uſher'd in by Severity and ill Uſage. But theſe are admirably fitted for the Devil's uſe, to fill the Houſe with Hypocrites inſtead of Believers, and transfer the Title of it from God to himſelf, and accordingly he has bin very careful to keep Poſſeſſion by the ſame Methods.

It was pretty early that ſome leſſer Hardſhips began with good Intention (I do not ſay warrantably) to be made uſe of as a Means to lead Men by a rougher Path to Truth, and keep them in a due Obedience and Conformity to it; but as Errors and falſe Doctrines crept into the Church, the *Romaniſts* ſtampt them with the Name of Truth itſelf, and Cruelty and Oppreſſion are now become their guard. One is amaz'd to reflect that theſe People ſhould have the Cuſtody of the Goſpel, and pretend

tend to be under the direction of it. There the principal Virtues recommended are Love, and Charity, and Condescension, and mutual Forbearance, and one would imagine there should be no other Contention among its Votaries, than who should be the first in doing any Office of Kindness to his Brother, who should bear most with his Weakness and Infirmities, take most Pains to inform his Judgment, and expect with greatest Patience the Event and Fruit of his Labour: This, I say, one would look for, but this is so far from being the Case in Fact, that he who reads the Doctrine of Christ, and at the same time considers the Practices of most that call themselves Christians, would suspect they believ'd, that this Prince of Peace who gave such admirable Directions for stifling all Revenge and private Grudges, did it only that he might reserve the Malice and ill Nature of his Proselytes for his own Service. For if any Person offers me an Injury or Affront, I am bound to put it up; if my very Enemies are in want, I am oblig'd to supply their Necessities; and if one small single Act of Injustice would raise me to the highest Pitch of Happiness in the World, I am notwithstanding

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prohibited to do it, I must not dare to gratify myself; and yet when the Cause of Religion comes in competition, I must presently loose the Reins to all my Passions, become Savage and Brutal, and then all the Extravagance and Intemperance I can be guilty of shall be sanctify'd under the Name of Zeal for the Lord. Thus the unconverted *Saul* behav'd himself, was indefatigable in hunting after those Hereticks the Christians; where-ever he met with them he seiz'd and bound 'em, carry'd them to *Jerusalem* in order to farther Prosecution, breath'd forth nothing but Threatnings and Slaughter against them, and in all this we have his own Testimony that he thought he did God good Service. But so soon as he had seen the blessed Jesus, how quickly did he change those furious Sentiments? He then breath'd another Spirit, learnt a better method of making Converts, and became all Things to all Men, if by any means he might gain some.

I come now to consider the Third Way whereby the Enemy of Mankind obstructs the Power of the Gospel, and that is, by seducing some of those who have asserted their Liberty in opposition to *Rome* to a false and scandalous use thereof. When

When the Reformation first endeavour'd to rescue the Minds of Men from that reproachful Slavery, it had so good and proper an effect, that every Body was rous'd and began to look about him, every Body thought it his Duty to believe for himself, and to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling*: But by degrees this Fervor slacken'd, Religion daily grew to be less their Business and their Care, and we are now arriv'd to such an utter Negligence in these Matters, that too many Protestants are fallen to a level with the Papists, if not below them in point of Ignorance. Because they are at liberty to read the Scriptures, they think they are at liberty to let them alone; and because they are not compel'd to believe as the Church believes, they have forsaken the most important Articles of the Christian Faith. Others (if I may be allow'd to say so) have the Scriptures too much in their Hands, 'tis the Critick, not the Christian that reads; their Diligence is employ'd rather to find out something that may countenance an odd Opinion of their own, than to search after the Will of God; and they study the Gospel (as S. Paul observes some to have Preacht it in his time) *of Strife and Contention*. But

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there is a third sort who come to the reading of the Scriptures with neither Learning, nor Understanding, nor Sobriety about 'em, and thro' Ignorance, the Suggestions of the Devil, and their own corrupt Affections, have rais'd such monstrous Doctrines to themselves, as are neither reconcileable to common Sense nor common Honesty. I dread to name a fourth sort, (but we are told there are such Men in the World) who lay the Scriptures before 'em for their Sport, and are extreamly diligent in searching after such Passages as may admit of a false Turn, or absurd Construction, or appear to carry in them a seeming Contradiction: They converse with our Lord as the *Pharisees* did, to see *how they may entangle him*, and use him more reproachfully than *Herod* or *Pontius Pilate*: God of his Mercy grant all those who are thus dispos'd may return to a better Mind; but one scarce knows where to ground an Hope for People who have carry'd their blasphemous Impiety to this outrageous height.

Thus we see in a few Instances how successfully the Devil has hitherto obstructed the building of God's House, I mean the Edification of his Church. Let us examin
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in the next Place, by what means he renders the City defenceless. And this he brings about by the management of our Passions, whereby People are often reduced to the condition of *Salamon's* covetous Man, find themselves possess'd of every Thing that is requisite to their Safety, but are under an Impotence of applying it to that end. Sometimes Pleasure is uppermost in their Thoughts, and then every thing call'd Business is excluded; nothing must be admitted to disturb the tranquillity of their Minds, they are not at leisure to attend the progress of Domestick or Foreign Affairs, nor to adjust their respective Interests and Powers, and to call them to Councils of this Nature, is to require them to act against their own.

Sometimes Covetousness takes place, and then every thing must give way to the advance of a private Fortune; the noblest Endowments a Man can be possess'd of, not only become useless but are render'd destructive to his Country by this detestable Vice; for how much soever he may discern the true Interest thereof a Bribe will effectually blind his Eyes, and in spite of his Teeth he is drawn into those Measures where Profit and present Advantage lye before him.

These are dangerous Hands to trust the publick Revenue in ; and tho' a Man of this Temper should have Honesty enough to resist the Temptation of applying it to his own Use, yet the Common-wealth may feel as ill Effects, from his unseasonable good Husbandry.

But Pride, and Envy, Distrust and Discontent, are Passions of the most pernicious Influence on the Publick ; these divide People into Parties and Factions, make them sometimes struggle for the Helm, and sometimes desert it ; and carry on their Animosities with so much Eagerness and Heat, as to be careless how the Vessel steers, unless it be after their Compass : Ruin cannot be far off when Things are arriv'd to this Extremity ; for it is a political Maxim, confirm'd by the Authority of our Lord himself, *That a Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand* ; and indeed what can it stand upon ? Strength is its Basis, and Policy its Support ; but how are these to be had where neither Hands nor Heads are united ? Where one Man sees his Country in Danger, and sullenly sits still because another stretches out his Arm to defend it : Where a reasonable Proposition is by one rejected, for no other cause

cause but that another makes it; and he had rather the Nation should lose the Benefit, than his Adversary find his Account in it: Nay (which is yet worse) in such a State as this all *the Foundations of the Earth*, as the *Psalmist* expresses it, *will be out of course*, the administration of Justice will be perverted, sometimes there will be no Inclination, and at others not sufficient Power to execute it; Impartiality, and Temper and Moderation, will be reputed Crimes; Personal Merit will be overlookt, and People will only regard each other as they wear the Badg of a Party. Virtues and Vices will appear thro' the false Medium of our Passions, not what they really are in themselves, but what we would have 'em be according as the Person who possesses them stands well or ill in our Opinion: And when this is the Case, what can hinder but that the Constitution at length must either infallibly sink under a prevailing Faction within itself, or else tamely yield to a Foreign Power, that shall at any time think fit to invade it? People may be inclin'd to flatter themselves that their Divisions will not have this dismal Event; that great and imminent Dangers will unite 'em, and each Party expects that the opposite will then open their Eyes and look upon Things in a true Light (that is, come over

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to their Judgment;) but this expectation is mutual, and must therefore of necessity keep 'em as they are: Reason indeed directs Men to consider what is right and what is wrong, what is for their real Benefit and what is not, and to make their Practice the result of their Judgment; but it is not the property of Passion to deliberate or debate, that is guided by the Will not the Judgment, and is usually tempted to run all Hazards rather than undergo the mortification of being brought under Restraint. What a dreadful Instance of this does *Josephus* set before our Eyes, in the Account he gives of the Siege and taking of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*, where neither Famine nor Pestilence, nor frightful Prodigies within, nor the Assaults of the *Roman* Army without their Walls, could bring the several Factions to mitigate their Animosities and consult their own Safety? Instead of this their implacable Rage against each other seem'd to increase as their Condition grew more desperate; they gave up all to their Diabolical Revenge, and were actually sheathing their Swords in their own Bowels at the very time that the *Roman* Soldiers scal'd their Walls. But instead of prosecuting these melancholy Reflections, or producing other Arguments and Examples to prove how powerfully the Devil applies

plies the Passions of Men to their own Destruction, let us rather turn our Thoughts to the Consideration they naturally lead us to, (*viz.*) How we may engage God to be on our Side, for he alone is superior to our Enemy, and it is only from the Magazine of his Word that we can have Armour proof against his Assaults. And to this two Things only are absolutely necessary, *Faith* and *Sincerity*. By *Faith* here I do not understand what the Word commonly and in its Latitude signifies, but (what however it is frequently set to signify in Scripture) a firm Belief of God's Almighty Power and entire Dependance thereupon, not exclusive of our own honest Endeavors, but only of our Confidence in them. By *Sincerity* I mean an upright Intention of doing in reality what we pretend to do, making the end of all our Actions, whether Religious or Civil, the Glory of God and the Benefit of Mankind.

And First of *Faith*, we know, it is thought no impolitick Practice among Men to throw themselves wholly into the Protection of one whose Favour they court. Great People love to have their Dependants to themselves, who, on their parts, have learnt very slavishly to call themselves their Creatures, and are not ashamed to own their Countenance the making
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of their Fortunes ; this is mean and despicable in one Man to another, but to God it is strictly due , and he expects it ; for what are we but as he has made us ? What have we that did not come from his Hand ? Or what can we expect that does not depend upon his Will ? It is therefore a manifest Breach of Allegiance to put our Trust in any Thing but God alone, and whenever we do so, what can we expect less from him than that he should leave us to make the Experiment, how impotent, how deceitful every Thing is besides himself ? *David* would needs compute the number of his People, but did that increase his Strength, or make him more formidable ? On the contrary within a few Days it cost him 70000 of 'em. *Hezekiah* expos'd his Treasure to the King of *Babylon's* Servants, did that contribute to the Peace of his House, or confirm that Prince's Friendship to his Family ? On the other side, the Servants carry'd home the Report of what they had seen, and the time came when they fetcht 'em all into their own Country, and carry'd *Hezekiah's* Children into Captivity along with 'em. God is pleas'd to afford infinite Instances of this kind in every Age and Place , sometimes by depriving People unexpectedly of that wherein they had placed their strong-

Strongest Hope; sometimes by making it a
 Sharp and cruel Temptation; so that it becomes
 the very Instrument of their Destruction. But
 God is a sure Rock, and whoever relies upon
 him, will not be affraid. As the Earth be remov'd,
 and the Mountains be carry'd into the midst of
 the Sea, the Waters thereof roar and be trou-
 led, and the Mountains shake with the swelling
 thereof. Earthquakes and Tempests cannot
 terrify him, whether they be such as Nature
 causes, or such as arise from the Passions of
 Men. The sacred History abounds with Ex-
 amples of the wondrous Force, I might ven-
 ture almost to say, the Omnipotence of Faith.
 God's condescension to our reasonable Desires
 and Prayers is the result of his good Will, but
 where Faith is employ'd he is pleas'd to make
 himself as it were a necessary Agent, and his
 Almighty Power executes the Will of Man.
 But they are only some few Heroes of the first
 Rank who have arriv'd to this extraordinary
 pitch of Faith; that which we are speaking
 of is of a humbler kind, which rests itself on
 the Veracity of God, and a full assurance that
 what he has promis'd he will certainly bring
 to pass. In the Case therefore of Religion a
 faithful Man is not terrify'd with Appearances,
 what though the Clouds gather and Storms
 threaten?

threaten? When God sees good, he can dissipate them in a moment. What though the Church should be in an afflicted State, so that the Enemies thereof should encourage one another, saying, *God hath forsaken her, persecute her and take her, for there is none to deliver her?* He that has Faith despises their Insolence, and knows their Attempt to be impracticable, *For he that seeth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision,* who may perhaps be provoked to hide his Face for a Season, but is not capable of forsaking his Church, nor shall the Gates of Hell prevail against her. And this Confidence of Faith gives the pious Man two Advantages, which the Wicked are always destitute of in their greatest Extremity. The First is that his Courage never forsakes him, he has computed the Devils Forces and his own, and finds himself superior through God that strengthens him; and tho' he may happen to be worsted in lesser Skirmishes, yet he knows he shall infallibly carry off the Victory. His other Advantage is, that he is never deserted of his Reason, nor subject to such Fears as may betray the Succors it affords; this enables him to fence with Difficulties, to seek shelter in a Storm, and if Danger cannot be avoided to face it like a Man.

